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HEINE'S FAMILY FEUD—THE CULMINATION OF HIS STRUGGLE FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY

Among the chapters in Heine's life which a new Heine biography will have to rewrite substantially is Heine's struggle with his relatives over the estate of his deceased uncle, the millionaire Solomon Heine. The version of Strodtmann, Heine's chief biographer, still commonly accepted by serious students, was based on very incomplete data and written with an obvious bias in Heine's favor. It limited itself chiefly to quoting extracts from Heine's letters calculated to put all the blame on Solomon's heirs and to reinforcing these utterances with strong invectives of his own. In pursuing this course Strodtmann, doubtless in good faith, propagated Heine's own official version of the matter—a version woven out of very thin tissue, as one discovers in scrutinizing its fabric without prejudice, but which, by force of repetition, has gained such a foot-hold among Heine's admirers that it is likely to stand for a long time despite anything to be said against it.¹

The new edition of Heine's correspondence² happily presents such a wealth of data concerning this struggle, in the form of letters by Heine, letters to Heine, and letters exchanged between other parties in Heine's behalf, that it is possible to reconstruct from them, almost without a gap, the entire history of the campaign, or rather series of campaigns, which Heine conducted against his uncle's heirs. The nature of this miniature warfare may hold the reader breathless upon discovering the subtle cunning lurking behind apparently innocent manoeuvres, the stealth and ingenuity of covert advances, feinted attacks and strategic retreats; and shock him by the ruthlessness and perfidy encountered at every step; but no portrait of Heine can lay claim to truth without pencilling in these sinister traits of his character and blending them convincingly with those that lend sensitiveness and spiritual refinement to his features.

¹ Even Friederich Hirth, the indefatigable collector and editor of Heine's correspondence, repeats substantially, in his introduction to Volume One, the Strodtmann legend.

² Heinrich Heine's Briefwechsel. Herausgegeben von Fr. Hirth; vol. I, 1914, G. Müller, München; vol. II, 1917, G. Müller, München; vol. III, 1920, Propyläen-Verlag, Berlin.

On December 28, 1844 Heine learned from his sister the news of his wealthy uncle's death. Altho this announcement shocked him to such an extent that he was unable to shed a tear, he felt no uneasiness concerning the stipulations of his uncle's will; in fact, he regarded his economic future as assured, and his thoughts were already engaged with the erecting of a biographical monument of gratitude to his benefactor.³ When, therefore, a few days later Carl Heine, Solomon's son and heir-in-chief, communicated to him the fact that instead of liberally increasing his annual pension his uncle's will left him a legacy of a paltry 8000 marks, coupled with an offer on Carl's part to continue the pension on condition that Heine submit to his censorship any manuscript he might write in regard to Solomon,⁴ Heine was thrown into a state of utter panic. He at once sent Carl a declaration of open war and began to marshal all the forces at his command for a fight to the finish. Heine's sojourn at Paris had been punctuated by an almost incessant series of personal and literary polemics; into all of them he plunged with a certain zest, keyed up by the consciousness of displaying his fine swordsmanship, wont to play with his adversary for the sake of the spectacle, to taunt and bait his victim before driving home the final thrust. Here is a struggle of a totally different order. This is a silent, underground fight; the combatants are interlocked with clenched teeth; no spark save that of hate glitters in their eyes; and its conclusion finds Heine crumpled on the ground, bleeding and broken.

To understand this struggle it is indispensable to review in all conciseness, yet omitting no salient feature, the circumstances which led up to it, namely Heine's relations to his uncle and his uncle's family during all the previous years; to know as precisely as possible the extent to which Heine derived financial support from his uncle, as well as the manner in which it was solicited and bestowed; to sift in so far as possible the charges and counter-charges of Heine and his uncle's family; and to discover to what extent a tie of genuine affection linked Heine to his uncle and his kin. Only then it will be possible to apportion justly the blame for Heine's disappointed hopes and claims.

³ Heine to his sister, Dec. 29, 1844.

⁴ Heine to Detmold, Jan. 9, 1845.

From the time of his adolescence, Heine's relations to his uncle were of a double nature. On the one hand, Solomon had undertaken to launch Heine on a mercantile career, and he had every reason, from his practical business-man's viewpoint, to be highly disgusted with his nephew's incompetence and his indifference to his business. On the other hand, Heine, immediately upon arriving in Hamburg in 1816, fell violently in love with his uncle's daughter Amalie; or, to put it more correctly, he had come to Hamburg with the fixed idea of falling in love with his cousin, which he proceeded to do forthwith, only to meet with the rebuff that rankled in his heart for years to come. The situation is complicated by the well-known fact of Heine's falling in love with Amalie's sister Therese seven years later, when the old wound burst open and festered until the latter's marriage to Dr. Halle in 1828.

Whatever one can say about Heine's love for his two cousins must be tinged with speculation, since, as practically every Heine scholar will agree, his love poetry must be ruled out as a source of positive evidence. The few letters handed down to us, in which Heine unburdens himself in regard to his love, make it clear beyond a doubt that Heine believed himself to be genuinely in love with his cousin Amalie, and that he suffered cruelly upon finding his desires thwarted; but they also make the supposition more than probable that Heine was in love rather with the idea of marrying one of his cousins than with their persons. As regards Amalie, at any rate, it is absurd to speak of Heine's passion for her as love at first sight; it was rather a love in anticipation of sight, for when Heine had last seen Amalie, two years before coming to Hamburg, they had both been still mere youngsters, and as to Heine, he was even upon arriving in Hamburg still in the early high-strung stages of adolescence.⁵ What is more likely, therefore, than that Heine, his imagination filled with tales of his uncle's wealth and luxury, his consciousness of his own intellectual superiority strained to the most exaggerated pitch, should from the outset have spun dreams of falling heir to a substantial share of the goods of this earth, accumulated by the slaves of the stock-market whom he felt to be immeasurably beneath him. In view of the fact that

⁵ As convincingly established by Beyer in his book: "Der junge Heine." Bonner Forschungen 1911.

to the end of his life Heine clung in theory and practice to the claim that the money magnates of the earth, and more particularly his wealthy relatives, owed him a living commensurate with his luxurious tastes and his rank as an intellectual, the assumption that Heine was, perhaps subconsciously, actuated in part by pecuniary motives even at the time of his first wooing of Amalie, can not be lightly dismissed.

If Heine was impressed with the influential position which his uncle commanded in Hamburg society, he none the less, during the time of his Hamburg apprenticeship, did not rate his personality any higher than that of the average banker and stock-jobber.⁶ It would be strange under these circumstances if Heine had succeeded in meeting his uncle outwardly on the terms of complete subordination and respect which the latter was wont to be shown by the other members of his family. It is far more likely that Heine, in keeping with his then ostentatiously rebellious attitude, made his uncle feel that he, the poet, was condescending in honoring him with his society. This attitude of Heine's and his utter failure in business doubtless laid the foundation for the sometimes good-natured, sometimes violent contempt which marked the relation of uncle to nephew until Solomon's death. Solomon's letters to Heine show that he always continued to rate him as an irresponsible youngster, a sort of entertaining good-for-nothing, who must constantly be shown his place, even if it takes the cane to do it.

A few years later, at the university, Heine found himself living on his uncle's charity, grudgingly enough given, partly because Solomon resented the spirit in which it was accepted and partly because he regarded it as wasted. In the meantime, however, Heine had learned to a certain extent to keep his feelings in check and, except when carried away by the passion of the moment, to appeal to his uncle by flattery rather than haughtiness. What grave psychological mistakes he made even then is shown by his dedication to his uncle of the "Tragödien und lyrisches Intermezzo" in 1823—a move which provoked Solomon's violent wrath.⁷ The old man, who had no conception of his nephew's poetic talent, can scarcely be blamed for resent-

⁶ Clearly shown by the tone of his reference to his uncle in his second letter to Sethe, October 27, 1816.

⁷ Heine to Varnhagen, June 17, 1823.

ing seeing his name coupled with a cycle of lyrics which the initiated, who knew of Heine's passion for his uncle's daughter, could not but regard as an out and out falsification of reality. Heine must have known that his uncle could not judge his poems on the basis of their aesthetic merits. The fact that he nevertheless risked this dedication is an early striking instance of his vanity getting the better of his judgment.

During Heine's years of study Solomon's name appears frequently in his letters to intimate friends. The thermometer of his relations with his uncle was constantly changing, largely because his own attitude was far from stable. He could not bring himself to do without his uncle's support, at the same time that he felt it below his dignity to accept it. Constantly planning to arrange his affairs in such a way as to make his uncle's aid unnecessary for the future, his good intentions were contradicted at every step by the soliciting and accepting of gifts which tightened the meshes of his dependence. The irksomeness of his dependence was aggravated by constant humiliations, the common lot of poor relatives, and poison was added to bitterness when Heine felt himself regarded—rightly or wrongly—by the members of his uncle's household as an intruder, spied upon and slandered, for the purpose of undermining the last vestige of his uncle's confidence in him. Thus Heine, suspicious in the extreme, would scent foul play whenever his uncle's pocketbook remained closed; he would react now by writing a letter which he characterized as a masterpiece of dignity and scorn, another time he would boast of not even deigning to thank his uncle when the latter again opened his purse in a particularly reluctant way; but a third time he was equally certain to beg forgiveness submissively and to pile flattery upon Solomon: to wheedle him into new concessions.

One would expect this chapter to be closed with Heine's graduation from Göttingen in the summer of 1825. But as his plans, either to practice law in Hamburg or to become a lecturer at the University of Berlin, came to nothing, we find him depending upon his uncle after as before, with their relations fluctuating as much as ever. In December 1825 he dates a letter to his friend Moser "Verdammtes Hamburg,"⁸ but

⁸ December 14, 1825.

during the first days of January he finds his uncle very gracious.⁹ Trouble thickens again when a friend of Heine's, a certain Cohn, takes it upon himself to play the intermediary between nephew and uncle, by telling the latter a long tale of woe and indiscreetly intimating that Heine had lost money in gambling. Heine, while freely admitting his gambling a little later to his easy-going friend Merkel,¹⁰ denies this to the conscientious Moser with an access of fury which would have been quite intelligible even had there been no truth in the accusation.¹¹

This incident was smoothed over, but matters came to a much more serious crisis in consequence of Heine's London trip in 1827 when, in addition to funds provided him by his uncle for the voyage, he cashed in a check for 200 pounds which he had induced his uncle to give him merely as a matter of form on the plea that it would serve as a very effective introduction to the Rothschild family. All in all, he must have drawn a pretty penny out of his uncle's pocket on that occasion, for he spent over 210 pounds in London, according to one letter of his,¹² and over 300 according to another,¹³ and yet managed to send an order for 800 Talers to his friend Varnhagen for safe keeping, to provide for an emergency.¹⁴ Thus, on one occasion at least, he did not practice the proverbial poet's improvidence. As to the 200 pounds obtained by trickery, we have Solomon's own words to vouch for the charge. In a letter of December 26, 1843, stimulated to good humor by a typical Hamburg Christmas dinner, he took occasion to recall to his nephew this little old time trick by recounting the story in the form of an anecdote—just by way of a reminder that old scores were not forgotten.¹⁵

From the year after the London incident we have a letter of Heine's to Solomon, written for the purpose of effecting a

⁹ Heine to Moser, Jan. 9, 1826.

¹⁰ Heine to Merkel, July 25 and August 16, 1826.

¹¹ Heine to Moser, Feb. 14, 1826.

¹² Heine to Merkel, August 20, 1827.

¹³ Heine to Varnhagen, October 19, 1827.

¹⁴ *ibidem.*

¹⁵ This letter, the authenticity of which can scarcely be questioned, is found, along with several other letters of Solomon's which I have occasion to refer to repeatedly, in the volume of "Heine-Reliquien," edited by Gustav Karpeles and Max Heine-Geldern. Berlin 1911.

reconciliation. The tone of this letter, dated September 15, 1828, bears visible evidence of the effort it cost the writer. On the one hand there is the attempt to placate and conciliate his uncle at any cost by showering him with protestations of love and respect; on the other hand Heine's pride and self-righteousness have their say by balancing the losses sustained by the uncle's purse against the wounds inflicted upon his own heart; in addition Heine would place the blame for their estrangement upon the malicious intrigues of other relatives.

Only in a general way do we know that Heine and his uncle seem to have been upon a better footing the year following,¹⁶ whereas in 1830 matters took a critical turn once more. Certainly this was due at least partly, if not wholly, to the general cry of protest raised by the tone of Heine's polemics against Platen.¹⁷ Very probably Solomon's wrath, which was doubtless dictated by the common verdict against Heine, was deep-seated enough to extend to his purse. Without this assumption it were difficult to explain why Heine, before his voluntary flight to Paris in 1831 should have had recourse to the bounty of a stranger, to whom he appealed on the ground of furthering the cause of Saint-Simonianism.¹⁸

During the first few years of Heine's life in Paris Heine's letters contain very little mention of his uncle, but the name of the latter's son Carl begins to assume a certain prominence. Carl found himself in Paris at the time of the cholera epidemic of 1832 and was among those stricken. Heine, who came to visit him often during his convalescence, took occasion to air this fact in press articles¹⁹ and letters,²⁰ making it appear that he had braved the terrors of the cholera for the sake of a very dear relative.²¹ Whether their friendship was reinforced

¹⁶ Heine to Varnhagen, Nov. 19, 1830.

¹⁷ Solomon to Heine, June 27, 1839.

¹⁸ Heine to Hartwig Hesse. Cf. Hirth's introduction to Heine's correspondence, vol. I, p. 120.

¹⁹ Werke V, 93. I quote the Elster edition thruout.

²⁰ Heine to Cotta, April 11, 1832.

²¹ That Carl's illness was not—to say the least—Heine's only reason for staying appears from other letters which explain his reluctance to leave Paris once on the ground of his expecting interesting political developments (Heine to Cotta, April 2, 1832), and once on the ground of pure laziness (Heine to Varnhagen, about May 20, 1832). The latter explanation was, of course, sheer bravado, calculated to emphasize his courage, about which he felt sensitive, as other letters show.

by any other ties than those of pleasure,²² whether, in fact, Carl, who was Heine's junior by a dozen years, came in for so much attention merely as a cousin rather than in his capacity of heir presumptive, I leave to the reader to judge on the basis of subsequent developments. At any rate they do not seem to have kept up any correspondence after Carl returned home, for Heine expressed his annoyance at Carl's silence to his brother Max.²³

It is safe to assume that during these years Heine received occasional gifts of money from his uncle. Thus we know of a Christmas gift of 2000 francs in 1834.²⁴ But the fall of 1836 again brought a complete rupture of relations between them.²⁵ Altho the cause of this is nowhere explicitly stated, a partial clue is offered by Heine's letter of August 5, 1837, to his brother Max, in which Heine accuses his uncle of having perpetrated an act against him which violated his honor and most painfully damaged his material interests in Paris, at a time when Heine, bowed down by an attack of yellow fever and by financial difficulties, had written his uncle in a tone which should have aroused his sympathy rather than his anger. Fortunately we have Heine's own admission as to the words which so incensed his uncle. He had the audacity to tell him: "Das Beste, was an Ihnen ist, besteht darin, dass Sie meinen Namen führen."²⁶ But of the act of punishment with which Solomon struck back at Heine, we hear nothing definite. What could it have been? I venture the following explanation. Remembering that an aggravating illness and very serious financial reverses had reduced Heine to a state of morbid irritability, heightened probably by the pressing demands of impatient creditors, it is easy to realize how his thoughts must have wound themselves in desperation around the man who had millions beyond his wants and gave lavishly when his reputation could be thereby enhanced; so that Heine utterly lost his head at the time when he wrote his uncle in terms which cast all discretion to the winds. Now it is possible that Heine, too desperate to resort

²² Heine to Christiani, July 15, 1833.

²³ Letter of April 21, 1834.

²⁴ Heine to Meyerbeer, April 6, 1835.

²⁵ Heine to Moser, November 8, 1836.

²⁶ Heine to Meyerbeer, March 24, 1839.

to entreaty, merely sent his uncle a peremptory demand for financial help; but could the latter's refusal to come to the rescue be construed as the "act which compromised Heine's honor and his credit in Paris"? I think not. But what if Heine, in blind desperation, had taken a short-cut and drawn a check upon his Paris banker against the name of Solomon Heine and simply announced to him the 'fait accompli' in a tone of resentment sharpened by his nervousness over what he had done? Granted this hypothesis, which certainly has nothing psychologically unlikely about it, in view of the London episode, what is more likely than that Solomon, stung to rage by this impudence, should have protested payment of the draft with a sarcastic note to the banker, cautioning him to trust to better guarantees than Heine's mere word for the future? This is only a hypothesis, I repeat, but it at least affords a plausible explanation for the most serious falling-out that occurred between Heine and his uncle.

Matters were now bad enough, but to make them worse, Heine's aunt, the wife of Solomon, died in January 1837, and Heine, smarting under the recent blow, felt unable to express his condolences to his uncle in other than the driest and most formal terms.

Here matters would have rested but for Heine's eternal financial difficulties. Altho at this time he was drawing an annual pension of 5000 francs from the French government and his income was further supplemented by royalties from his German and French publishers and by repeated drafts on the funds of the composer Meyerbeer, in return for press agent's services,²⁷ he confessed himself in January 1837 to be in debt to the extent of 20,000 francs.²⁸ Unlucky speculations and possibly gambling²⁹ rather than mere reckless spending must account for this comparatively enormous debt. To pay it back by means of his pen was out of the question, hence it became more necessary for him than ever to see amicable relations with his uncle restored. But Heine well knew that

²⁷ See Heine's letters to Meyerbeer of April 6, 1835 and May 24, 1842.

²⁸ Heine to Campe, January 23, 1837.

²⁹ When trying later to bridge the differences with his uncle, Heine cautions his friend Detmold that under no circumstances must Solomon learn the true source of his financial troubles (Heine to Detmold, July 29, 1837).

this time the end in view required extreme caution and delicate manipulation, and he made his preparations accordingly. It is worth our while to study these manoeuvres in detail, since they served as a model on a reduced scale for those which Heine set on foot after his uncle's death.

The first of these manoeuvres would scarcely be recognized as such by the reader who lacks acquaintance with the devious tactics which Heine had learned in the school of French journalism.³⁰ It took the form of a letter to his publisher, Campe, containing the following apparently innocent paragraph:³¹

Meine Mutter schreibt mir, ich gäbe ein Buch heraus mit einem Motto, worin ich Salomon Heine beleidige. Wer mag denn solche Lügen erfinden? Ich stehe schon schlecht genug mit meinem Oheim, ich sitze bis am Hals in grossen Zahlungsnöthen, und er lässt mich im Stich, aber ich bin nicht der Mann, der um dergleichen Misere auch nur in einer Zeile sich rächt. Gottlob, als ich meine 'Memoiren' schrieb, wo er oft besprochen werden musste, standen wir noch brilliant, und ich habe wahrlich ihn con amore gezeichnet.

On the face of it this looks like a purely personal confession, prompted by no other motive than that of unburdening himself to an intimate about a matter which touched him very keenly. But Heine was not in the habit of writing letters for the mere purpose of self-expression, least of all to his publisher, whom he, moreover, regarded as an awful gossip.³² This letter, however, takes on an entirely new meaning when we assume that Heine counted upon its contents being retailed either directly or indirectly to his uncle. Then the following salient points of the letter take on a new aspect: 1) Certain other parties are interested in keeping Heine and his uncle embroiled; 2) Heine is in a terrible financial plight; 3) he feels grieved at his uncle's indifference to his troubles; 4) he emphasizes his own generosity by way of contrast and appeals to his uncle's vanity by referring to unpublished memoirs which, in all likelihood, existed at that time only in his imagination.³³ Proof

³⁰ As to Heine's initiation into the practices of French journalism, see his letter to Lewald, March 1, 1838.

³¹ Heine to Campe, December 20, 1836.

³² Heine refers to Campe as "die Schwatzlise" in his letter to Ferdinand Lassalle, February 27, 1846.

³³ Heine again refers to these memoirs at this time in his letters to Campe of January 23 and March 1, 1837. Both these letters, however, mention the memoirs not as a finished manuscript but as something still under his pen.

of the direct kind is lacking, to be sure, that this letter was intended for his uncle's rather than his publisher's consumption, but since succeeding events will show that it was a favorite device of Heine's to write letters for the consumption of a third party and even to add a covering note with full instructions to the addressee how to proceed in communicating its contents apparently on his own initiative, there can be no question that Heine either did so in this case, the covering note having been lost or destroyed, or that he relied upon Campe's intuitive tact to sense the real import of the missive. It should not be forgotten that Campe, being a resident of Hamburg, frequently negotiated with Heine's family on his behalf.

In terms of warfare the above letter to Campe would represent a scouting detachment, sent in advance of larger operations; in terms of diplomacy it would be called an informal feeler. Whatever steps Campe may have taken to approach Heine's uncle must have been ineffective, for on May 23 of the following year Heine again complains to Campe that he is on very bad terms with his uncle, who inflicted a terrible insult upon him the previous year, adding: "Es ist schlimm genug, dass dieser Mann, der, wie ich höre, Institute stiftet, um heruntergekommene Schacherer wieder auf die Beine zu bringen, seinen Neffen mit Weib und Kind in den unverschuldetsten Nöthen hungern lässt." It is impossible to suppress a smile at the phrase 'Weib und Kind,' one of Heine's most characteristic exaggerations, and one wonders who is supposed to figure as the child in this instance,—his wife Mathilde, who was certainly enough of a child to deserve the name, or Cocotte, the garrulous parrot that so often evoked Heine's jealousy!³⁴

Moreover these references to the memoirs are meant both as a threat and as an appeal to Campe's business instinct; for Heine alleges that his publisher, by his reluctance to pay the price Heine demanded for his "Börne," is causing him to shelve the writing of an exceedingly timely book in favor of something not intended for publication for years to come. I can mention only in passing that statements of Heine, calculated to force his publisher's hand, can never be taken at their face value.

³⁴ I cannot take seriously Karpeles' claim ("Heine und seine Zeitgenossen," p. 216 ff., Berlin, 1888) that Heine should have adopted a child for which he had stood god-father. Karpeles, always without a grain of critical objectivity,

After these first ineffective manoeuvres Heine began to marshal his forces in earnest. He had gathered enough from past experiences to realize that a reconciliation with his uncle would not be a guarantee against further troubles; hence he now made it his aim to get from his uncle the promise of a definite annual pension. To this end he first impressed the lawyer Herman Detmold and his brother Max, who was then on a visit in Hamburg, into his service. Detmold, whose friendship with Heine dated back to his student days, was one of those men, unfortunately, who by their readiness to use the most questionable means in serving the cause of a friend, made it regrettably easy for Heine to follow the baser side of his nature. Detmold, in fact, must be blamed for having steered Heine upon the disastrous course which he later pursued in connection with his uncle.³⁶

The task intrusted to Detmold was to win over Heine's brother Max to the work of effecting the reconciliation. Heine's letter of July 29, 1837 gives him minute instructions how to proceed.

Max ist in Hamburg zum Besuche bey meiner Familie. Vor etwa fünf Wochen erhielt ich Brief von ihm aus Hamburg, worin er mir schrieb, dass er ungefähr drei Monath dableibe. Wenn Sie ihm daher dorthin baldigst schreiben, trifft ihn Ihr Brief. Er steht dort in höchster Gunst bey meinem Oheim, und es wäre möglich, dass Ihr Brief, worin Sie ihm über mich Nachricht geben, zu meinem Heile wirken kann. Sie müssen ihm nemlich die Seele heiss machen, dass er alles aufbietet, mich mit meinem Oheim zu versöhnen und mir bey demselben ein Jahrgeld auszuwirken. Der wahre Grund, warum meine Finanzen so schlecht stehen, dürfen Sie freylich nicht merken lassen, aber das Faktum, dass ich in der grössten Geldnoth bin, und die erschütterndsten Folgen daraus zu befürchten stehen, müssen Sie so pragmatisch hinstellen, dass diese Geldnoth, nur durch edles Unglück entstanden, eben zu meinem Vortheil spricht. In der That, Sie dürfen gestehen, dass ich um alle Früchte meines Fleisses geprellt worden, dass ich alles verkauft habe, um meine Schulden zu bezahlen, dass ich alle fremde Unterstützungshülfe abgelehnt, dass ich mich vergebens an meinen Onkel gewendet (das ist nicht wahr), dass Sie vernommen

here follows the legend set a-foot, among others, by Heine's brother Gustav, whose pen-portrait of Heine pictured the dying poet as a sort of Christ, surrounded by beautiful children. See Gustav Heine's essay, dated August 28, 1855, as reprinted in "Heine-Reliquien," especially pages 250 and 259.

³⁶ Heine to Detmold, July 29, 1837: "Sie sehen, Ihr Unterricht hat gefruchtet; wenn auf diesem Wege keine Hülfe kommt, so hab ich mein Latein verloren."

hätten, wie unbarmherzig mein Onkel mir alle Hülfe entzogen (das ist auch nicht wahr)—kurz, Sie schreiben ihm einen Brief, womit er bey meinem Oheim, welcher empört seyn wird, dass man ihn solcher Lieblosigkeit fälschlich beschuldigt, etwas ausrichten kann.³⁶

Two features of this letter deserve the closest attention. In the first place, the duplicity practiced by Heine against both his uncle and his intermediary, his brother Max, in regard to the causes of his financial troubles and the steps he had taken to adjust them. We are left in the dark as to the actual facts in the case, unfortunately, because Heine's confidential explanation of his troubles to Detmold had been given orally, during the latter's visit to Heine in Paris. In the second place, the remarkable psychology of Heine's approach to his uncle. So Heine expected to placate his uncle by having patent falsehoods, emanating from himself, reported to his uncle, who, instead of sending his nephew to the devil, is expected to demonstrate the falsity of these accusations by opening his purse once more! We ask in astonishment, is this a prudent course to pursue, gauged merely by the likelihood of its success? Does it not savor of the 'kleine Schlauheit' of the Nazarene, as Nietzsche put it, rather than of the unscrupulous amorality of the super-man?—It will be necessary to return to this point somewhat later.

A few days after writing to Detmold, Heine sent Max a letter calculated to coincide with the one to be written by Detmold. To a reader familiar with Heine's correspondence the long preamble of this letter is sufficient to put him on his guard. As in similar cases, when Heine felt diffident about asking for a service,³⁷ he expatiates on the nature of his brotherly sentiments, telling Max, "Du bist der einzige von meiner Familie, der mich schweigend verstehen kann."³⁸ In accord-

³⁶ So far as I can see, Heine's accusations against his uncle, followed by his own denial of them in the same paragraph, permit of only two possible interpretations, neither one of which I find entirely plausible:—Either Heine's uncle must have continued to give him a certain ((but insufficient) amount of financial support even after the rupture of their relations in 1836; or Heine must have deliberately deceived Detmold as to the extent of his falling out with his uncle. I incline to the former interpretation, partly because of Heine's intimacy with Detmold, and partly because of the parallelism between this letter and the one Heine wrote Meyerbeer under date of March 24, 1839, discussed below.

³⁷ See Heine's letter to Meyerbeer, April 6, 1835.

³⁸ Heine to Max, August 5, 1837.

ance with his instructions to Detmold he refers to his troubles in general terms as "notwendige Folge meiner sozialen Stellung und meiner geistigen Begabung." Then he turns to discuss the specific grievances which estrange him from his uncle, of which there are three, namely 1) the familiar accusation that he is being systematically slandered by members of his uncle's household; 2) a sin committed against him by his cousin Carl, not specified here; 3) the act on the part of his uncle which broke the peace.

The result of Max's attempts at mediation seem to have been confined to his advising Heine to write his uncle in person and beg his forgiveness. With the utmost revulsion Heine subjected himself to this new humiliation, and every line of his letter to Solomon (September 1, 1837) reveals his desperate efforts to appear to prostrate himself completely before his uncle without yielding an inch of his dignity. He begins by waving aside all blame for past misunderstandings. "Mein Gewissen ist ruhig, und ich habe ausserdem dafür gesorgt, dass, wenn wir alle längst im Grabe liegen, mein ganzes Leben, mein ganzes, reines, unbeflecktes, obgleich unglückliches Leben, seine gerechte Anerkennung findet." But self-justification was not, as it might appear, the only motive for writing these words; the renewed mention of his memoirs contains a veiled promise or a veiled threat, according to the turn that the negotiations might take, and Heine knew that his uncle would not miss his meaning. The body of the letter, however, pictures Heine as completely bowed down with grief over having lost the affection of the man whom he reverenced almost to the degree of worship. He appeals to the natural kindness of his heart, to his amiability and generosity. He finds his uncle's hardness against himself so unnatural that he can explain it only by the whisper of poisonous tongues. Every word, in short, is calculated to give the impression that his uncle's affection is the priceless boon which Heine craves to regain and that there is not the remotest thought in his mind of exploiting the millionaire. To read this letter without keeping in mind at every moment the effect it was calculated to produce were to miss its real nature altogether.

This letter also clears up in part the burden of Heine's grudge against his cousin Carl. It has already been mentioned

that on the occasion of his aunt's death Heine had expressed his condolences to his uncle in terms dictated by his anger. Now Heine claims to have written at the same time a very different letter, expressing his real emotions, to his cousin Carl, whom he accuses of having intentionally kept his father in ignorance of this letter, so as to thwart the stirring of any generous feelings on his part. This charge against Carl he had already uttered in his letter of August 29 to his brother Max, and it recurs, in very exaggerated form, in a letter to Meyerbeer, written, two years later, specifically for his uncle's consumption.³⁹ I confess that the last wording of this charge has even raised doubts in my mind as to whether such a letter was written at all, in spite of Heine's insistence that Solomon should force Carl to produce that letter. "Ich erinnere mich," he says, "als ich jenen Brief an Carl Heine beendigt hatte, fiel ich ohnmächtig nieder und Mathilde musste mir mit Essig die Schläfe reiben und um Hilfe rufen—Ich erinnere mich, der Bruder von Detmold, der den Brief auf meinem Tische liegen sah und ihn las, ward ganz davon erschüttert."

Be that as it may, two things stand out clearly. First, regardless of whose the fault may have been, Carl had turned from a friend into Heine's enemy. Second, Heine cleverly tries to jockey his uncle out of his strategic position, by beclouding the issue. Whereas the death of his aunt had occurred after Heine was completely embroiled with his uncle, he would make it appear as tho his apparent lack of sympathy were the reason for his uncle's irreconcilable attitude. Heine doubtless calculated that if he succeeded in thrusting a specious issue in place of the real one into the focus of his uncle's attention, he could be confident of ultimate victory.

These tactics seem to have had their effect, for altho, after waiting for two weeks without any results, Heine had to entreat Detmold anew to goad his brother Max to further action by painting an even more lurid picture of his troubles,⁴⁰ we find Heine informing Campe a year later that the reconciliation had long since taken place, and he was now looking forward

³⁹ Heine to Meyerbeer, March 24, 1839.

⁴⁰ Heine to Detmold, September 17, 1837.

to his uncle's visit in Paris.⁴¹ The real purpose, however, for which the reconciliation had been staged, namely the securing of a fixed pension, still lacked fulfilment, and Heine, with his customary tenacity wherever his material welfare was at issue, held this plan in the background of his mind, ready to follow it up at the first favorable turn.

The eagerly awaited opportunity came in March of the following year, when Meyerbeer, then in the zenith of his fame, had occasion to be in Hamburg. Here at last was an intermediary whose word was bound to have weight with his uncle, because he was a fellow-Jew, the possessor of great wealth, and the most talked-of composer and entrepreneur in the realm of the most fashionable of the arts. Moreover, Solomon had, from his Paris visit, recent first-hand impressions of the pomp and dazzle of Meyerbeerian grand opera. Meyerbeer, on the other hand, whose fame was due in the largest measure to his fabulous control of the press,—a fact that elicited the withering sarcasm of Richard Wagner—had every reason to exert himself on Heine's behalf because of his invaluable press agent's services.

Heine once more resorted to his favorite tactics. He wrote a letter, addressed to Meyerbeer⁴² but intended for his uncle, in which he covered the following points: 1) He again minimizes the benefits received from his uncle and threatens to render an accounting of them to the last penny in his memoirs. 2) He complains of his uncle's extravagant benevolence to undeserving strangers, while allowing his own kin to suffer want. 3) He claims that his uncle is conscious of being in the wrong in this matter and draws the conclusion that he must be bent on finding fault with his nephew in order to justify his own miserliness. 4) He is convinced that in his heart of hearts his uncle has far more respect for the "poor indigent scholar" than for rich stock-jobbers. 5) He repeats the most extravagant affirmations of his love and reverence for his uncle, contrasting his own unselfish love with the fawning professions of his uncle's exploiters in the bosom of the family. 6) Finally he touches

⁴¹ For Heine's success during this visit in mystifying his uncle as to his talent of improvisation, see Hirth, introduction to volume I, page 63, of Heine's correspondence.

⁴² March 24, 1839.

upon the two reasons for their estrangement. He concedes having written the statement that had aroused his uncle's ire. He does not remember it, to be sure, but his uncle's veracity stands without question; however, as his uncle must realize, it was a purely momentary outburst, due to an access of nerves, and signifies nothing. As to the manner in which he expatiates on the second reason, his apparent callousness over the bereavement of his uncle's family, this has already been discussed above.⁴³

Enclosed with this letter was a commentary for Meyerbeer's guidance. In this Heine urged him to give his uncle the impression that everybody believed Heine to be the beneficiary of a fixed yearly sum, motivating this request as follows:

Er muss an der Ambition angegriffen werden, dass er mir endlich ein bestimmtes Jahrgeld aussetzt, welches, wenn es auch noch so gering, mir sehr wünschenswerth wäre und auch mein Verhältnis zu meinem Oheim sicherer gestaltet; ich habe deshalb in meinem Briefe immer behauptet, er habe nie was Ordentliches für mich getan, obgleich er dennoch sich manchmal sehr honett gegen mich benommen; aber eben indem ich ihm ein bischen Unrecht thue, wird er angespornt, meinen Behauptungen auch durch erneute That zu widersprechen.

As if men were ever prodded to kindness by deliberate libel! I have called attention to this singular process of reasoning above. It indicates as remarkable a degree of sophistification as it does a lack of knowledge of human nature. Heine never acquired the latter, and it is safe to say that most of his troubles were due to his inability to gauge the effects of his actions upon men. One of the clearest instances of this is his almost touching naïveté in heightening the provocative tone of his political articles in order to make the governments of the German states more anxious to negotiate with him.

However, the gods were kind to Heine for once, knowing that they would have the laugh on him in the end, and Meyerbeer, thanks to his own astuteness, doubtless, rather than to Heine's counsels, succeeded in getting Solomon to promise Heine a yearly pension of 4000 francs, later increased to 4800. Here was a moiety of security attained at last after half a lifetime of battling!—

⁴³ See page 84 of this paper.

The history of the next few years has little to tell us in regard to Solomon. The "lion of the menagerie," as Heine once styled him,⁴⁴ dozed, and only once did he open his mouth for a growl, when Heine had the tactlessness to send him a Christmas present in the name of Mathilde, to whom Solomon seems to have been in the habit of sending a Christmas check for 400 francs. Solomon at once came back with the emphatic request never to send him any gift again.⁴⁵ Apparently it did not appeal to his business sense to receive gifts from his own dependents. In April 1843 we find Heine writing his brother Max that he is on good terms with his uncle from whom he receives 4800 francs annually, about one third of his expenses.⁴⁶ In May of the same year, Solomon, at Heine's request, made his nephew a present of his portrait. The next month Heine acknowledges having received a very affectionate letter from his cousin Carl, indicating that on the surface at least their differences also had been adjusted.⁴⁷

Heine's relations to his uncle entered a new phase in the fall of 1843 when the health of the latter, who was then 76 years old, began to fail. Heine's concern was at once aroused. To his mother he expressed himself in very affectionate terms in regard to his uncle and entreated her to keep him minutely informed of the state of his health. In the same letter he told her that in spite of his longing to see her it would be impossible for him to come to Germany that same year.⁴⁸

But exactly a month later, without motivating his change of plans, he announced to his mother his sudden decision to make the journey, enjoining her to keep his plan secret. Even his uncle was to be informed of his plan only one day before his departure, owing to weighty reasons, as he added without further comment. We who are accustomed to the inscrutable wisdom with which the publication of government announcements is timed, cannot fail to attach a meaning to this secrecy. Was it fear of his uncle's possible disapproval or of the counter-propaganda of hostile relatives that prompted it?

⁴⁴ Heine to Christiani, July 15, 1833.

⁴⁵ Solomon to Heine, December 24, 1839.

⁴⁶ Heine to Max, April 12, 1843.

⁴⁷ Heine to his mother, June 18, 1843.

⁴⁸ Heine to his mother, September 18, 1843.

There can be no doubt that Heine decided on this flying trip into Germany solely on account of his uncle, altho I would not for a moment question the genuineness of his affectionate longing to see his mother. In his first letter to his wife, who had remained in Paris, he admits having undertaken the trip for the sole purpose of seeing his uncle and his mother.⁴⁹ But why should he have been so anxious to see his uncle? Heine's own claim, that he felt a sincere attachment for the old man, has melted away, I trust, in the face of our analysis. There remains only the legitimate assumption that Heine had come to ingratiate himself more firmly in Solomon's favor, so as to make sure of being liberally remembered in his will.

As his letters to Mathilde show, he was satisfied with the degree of his success. In his first letter he reports himself as very much in his uncle's good graces; on another occasion he repeats his belief that he has made a good impression, adding, that he is taking all possible pains to be amiable,—a very difficult task in the society of so many uninteresting people.⁵⁰ As to Carl he felt much more uneasy; he distrusted him; and he enjoined Mathilde never to breathe a syllable to Carl, who was expected for the winter in Paris, about Heine's recently matured plan to spend the following summer together with her in Hamburg.⁵¹ Perhaps this precaution was due to the unconcealed contempt for Mathilde on the part of Carl's wife,⁵² who was Heine's bitter enemy.⁵³

The Christmas season brought Heine an unusually long letter from his uncle, full of banter, as most of Solomon's letters to his nephew seem to have been. He took pleasure in teasing Heine by counting up all the courses of his Christmas dinner, by reminding him of the London affair, by addressing his letter to him as the man who found that the best thing about him was Heine's name, and by poking fun at him for his alleged ignorance of money matters—but not a word to imply that his estimation of his nephew had risen in any way.⁵⁴— In the course of the

⁴⁹ Heine to Mathilde, October 31, 1843.

⁵⁰ Heine to Mathilde, November 5, 1843.

⁵¹ Letter to Mathilde, November 10, 1843.

⁵² Letter to Mathilde, December 6, 1843.

⁵³ Heine to Detmold, January 9, 1845.

⁵⁴ Solomon to Heine, December 26, 1843.

winter Carl arrived in Paris, but there developed no cordiality of intercourse between his family and that of his cousin.⁵⁵

The next summer Heine carried out his plan to make his and Mathilde's stay at Hamburg. For reasons which Heine was careful to conceal Mathilde, however, was soon sent back to Paris, and Heine decided to continue the task of cultivating his uncle's favor single-handed. There was much at stake, as Solomon's health had taken a decided turn for the worse, and Heine complained to Mathilde of his uncle's fitful moods of violent irritability alternating with unwonted gentleness.⁵⁶ But he stuck to his guns, keeping his nerves under rigid control, as the restraint with which his confidence of his victory is announced would indicate. "Vergiss nicht," he writes his wife on September 11, "dass ich nur für Dich lebe, und wenn Du in diesem Augenblicke nicht glücklich bist, so beunruhige Dich nicht: *die Zukunft gehört uns.*"—*Die Zukunft gehört uns.* These four words, underlined in Heine's letter, light up the page as a flash of sheet lightning a murky sky on a summer night.

Early in October he returned to Paris, impatiently awaiting developments that could not much longer be delayed. He entreated his sister to send him weekly bulletins regarding the state of the old man, adding, "es ist mir über alle Begriffe wichtig."⁵⁷

Then, at the turn of the year, came the announcements of Solomon's death and his division of his estate, like a succession of thunder-claps. Heine was panic stricken, and "Mathilde sat by the fire-side like a marble image."⁵⁸ Eight thousand marks left to Heine, as to each of his brothers, was his only share of his uncle's millions. No mention of his pension in Solomon's will, but instead a dry announcement on the part of Carl, the heir-in-chief, that he would undertake to pay the pension, or part of it,⁵⁹ on condition that Heine submit to his censorship anything he would write in regard to the deceased.

⁵⁵ Heine to his sister, January 23, 1844.

⁵⁶ Heine to Mathilde, August 12; August 16, 1844.

⁵⁷ Heine to his sister, November 28, 1844.

⁵⁸ Heine to Campe, January 8, 1845.

⁵⁹ Heine's letters on this point (to Campe, January 8; to Detmold January 9, 1845) lack the desired clearness, and the text of Carl's communication is not available.

"They want to gag me," was his comment,⁶⁰ and he who had hept his indignation and resentment over blistering humiliations bottled up for years, now broke loose from all restraint. The cry of hate was the only voice he heard sounding out above the roar of seething emotions. If it was war that was wanted, there was his glove. And now he unleashed his dogs of war on the trail of those whom he held responsible for his defeat.

Was this what the family wanted? Were they looking for an infernal press campaign of mud-slinging? Certainly not. Their manoeuvres were inspired by hate and fear—a fear which we have seen Heine foster by his frequent ambiguous allusions to his memoirs. But ordinary gossip, with which the air was rife, seems to have done its share also to heighten the tension. Heine's sister had allowed indiscreet utterances to drop toward Therese Heine, and she in turn had retailed them, grown to threats, to her brother Carl.⁶¹ Now the family felt that in their wealth they had a weapon which put Heine at their mercy. They had enough reason for hating Heine. His protestations of affection for his uncle and his kin had been too transparent for them not to see the contempt for them all lurking beneath. They had watched his manoeuvres to steal himself into his uncle's affection with a suspicious eye, and they had countermanoeuvred, with the advantage of being constantly on the ground. Of his fame they saw only the notoriety of the scandal-monger who had pilloried many a member of their wealthy set. Conceding that they were made of common clay without any admixture of the finer ingredient that shone thru the lower side of Heine's character, is it just to blame them for having parried Heine's manoeuvres in kind? Is it just to refer to their machinations as a foul crime and palliate the identical reactions of Heine's own nature as a failing of genius or explain them away entirely? They must be judged according to the ethics of their set, low tho those may have been, and it should be admitted that they did what was natural under the circumstances, namely gratify their resentment and listen to the voice of fear in consequence, instead of following a more prudent course.

Had Carl Heine been a realist, bent at all cost upon glorifying the name of his family, even at the expense of his personal

⁶⁰ Heine to Campe, January 8, 1845.

⁶¹ Heine to his brother Gustav, December 17, 1850.

feelings, he would have seen to it that Heine's craving for a life-long pension had been amply fulfilled. Had Solomon remembered his nephew at all adequately in his will, and had Carl taken pains to court Heine's favor, appealing to him by flattery rather than by threats, it is as certain as any prediction can be that Heine would have written a eulogy of his uncle in a tone dictated to an equal degree by his gratitude and by his desire to erect a monument to the name of Heine. The portrait of the 'fearful tyrant'⁶² would then have been retouched, so as to make his burly directness a cloak masking the most sensitive kindness. The arrogance of the 'nouveau riche' in his bearing to his dependents, and his fawning to win the favor of the old and influential Christian families, would have assumed the light of the manly self-consciousness of the self-made man, and of innate modesty. But if Carl ever felt the voice of prudence counselling him to mask his resentment by smiles, he turned a deaf ear to it in order to gratify his malice by showing Heine his power. The frequent accusation against Carl, launched by Heine and repeated often since, that ordinary dirty avarice was Carl's motive in depriving the poet of his paltry pension, is based on such flimsy psychological foundations and is refuted so completely by Carl's subsequent liberality to him and his widow⁶³ that it should not be taken seriously for a moment.

The struggle that ensued resembles a series of highly diversified military campaigns. Frontal attacks vary with attacks on the enemy's flank and in his rear. There is a great deal of feinting, and there are insincere peace overtures to gain time for a new attack. The warfare is of the most ruthless kind. The attacker poisons his enemy's wells, and tries to sow division within his ranks. He is constantly on the lookout for new allies, and if need be, like an oriental despot he drives his own troops into the fight with the lash.

Heine opened his first campaign by calling his publisher, Campe, and his friend Detmold to the colors. He had decided upon a three-fold attack; by threatening a suit at law, by marshalling the forces of the press to his aid, and by seeking

⁶² Heine to Campe, February 4, 1845.

⁶³ Strodtmann in his biography remarks that Carl's will provided a pension of 5000 francs for Heine's widow. II, 343. Third edition.

the mediation of a third party interested in bringing about peace. To Detmold Heine looked for legal counsel as to contesting his uncle's will, but he expected more immediate aid from Detmold's acquaintance with the dark side of journalism. Altho he believed he could recover his pension by entreaties, he thought threats would be more effective. To this end Detmold was to get busy at once and write and smuggle into as many newspapers as possible a series of anonymous defamatory articles directed against Carl and particularly his brother-in-law Halle, Therese's husband.⁶⁴ These articles were to be couched in such a way as to be favorable to Solomon and reflect blame on his heirs. Furthermore, public opinion was to be won over by making the controversy appear in the light of an issue between poet and millionaire—an issue for which he subsequently supplied the driving power in the form of the slogan "Genius" versus "Geldsack."⁶⁵ While these first articles against Halle were making their appearance, Campe was to approach him thru a third party, in order to persuade him to use his good offices in Heine's behalf, so as to save his own good name from further vilification.⁶⁶

The first of these articles from Detmold's pen Heine greeted with boundless joy, and he begged him to continue at once in the same vein, as victory hinged entirely upon the speed of such surprise attacks. That victory by this method would come within a month or not at all, was his opinion.⁶⁷ While Detmold's articles were doing their work, he again urged Campe to secure Halle's intervention in his favor. To Campe, who seems to have been not fully initiated into these dark intrigues, he expressed regret at the article he had seen concerning Halle, insinuating that it must have come from the pen of some relative trying to spoil his chances for the senatorship for which he was a candidate. His perfidy went so far as to add that with great effort on his part he had sidetracked a similar article of which he had received wind in Paris. As specifically stated in a covering note, it was Heine's intention that Halle should be given this letter to read.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Heine to Detmold, January 9, 1845.

⁶⁵ Heine to Ferdinand Lassalle, February 27, 1846.

⁶⁶ Heine to Campe, January 8, 1845.

⁶⁷ Heine to Detmold, January 23, 1845.

⁶⁸ Heine to Campe, February 4, 1845.

The reasons for concentrating his first fire upon Halle shed some very interesting light on Heine's generalship. Heine singled out Halle as the weaker foe in more than one respect. For one thing, Heine seems to have regarded him as less hostile to himself than Solomon's other sons-in-law and Carl himself; he blames him for having played at best a passive rôle during the machinations against him;⁶⁹ hence there was reason to believe that he might be more tractable than the others. But more important than this was Heine's calculation that Halle could not at the present time afford to stand up against a campaign of slander, in view of his candidacy for the vacant Hamburg senatorship.

From the outset of the struggle the ramifications of Heine's duplicity are so intricate that without the utmost circumspection at every step the reader of his letters is apt to be utterly bewildered as to Heine's real thoughts and sentiments. In feeling one's way forward, one has to keep in mind that not even Heine's agents were let into his full confidence. It is legitimate to wonder, in fact, whether Heine knew his own mind from one hour to the next. Thus on January 13, 1845 he wrote Detmold a letter which in point of demoralization is hard to equal. He expresses himself as ready to render any declaration desired, on condition of his receiving the pension integrally and irrevocably. He is ready to sacrifice his honor and comfort himself with the old monkish maxim: "Contemnere mundum, contemnere se ipsum, contemnere se contemni." Yet under this same date he writes to Campe in diametrically opposite terms, asserting that it is not a question of money but of his "ethical consciousness and his offended sense of justice." Now, since it was Campe who had been assigned the rôle of mediator and Detmold that of blackmailer, the assertions in the letter to Campe can not be dismissed as a well-calculated lie; for that to be the case the two statements would have had to be reversed. The contradiction rather shows that Heine's mind must have been in a state of turmoil bordering on chaos. As he himself felt, he had either to break down physically or go insane, and while his body snapped under the strain his reason also suffered.

⁶⁹ Heine to Campe, January 13, 1845.

In more than one respect Heine utterly lost his head; for, soon after, at the same time that he was attempting to negotiate with Carl thru Halle, by false protestations of friendship, by threats of a law suit (without a ghost of a legal claim as he then already knew),⁷⁰ by even more terrible threats of risking exposure in the public pillory in the bosom of his family,⁷¹ and by the offer of complete moral surrender to the demands of his family, as long as the money issue were satisfactorily settled,⁷²—all of which were packed into the letter to Campe which the latter was to let Halle read—; at the same time Heine personally concocted a pair of anonymous articles, the first containing a poisonous attack against his family and the second a defense of the family, in reply to the first, couched in such a way as to be even more compromising for them than the attack. These he sent to his friend Heinrich Laube, the clever journalist whom experience had taught that a pose of blunt honesty is a roomy mantle that will cover many sins, and asked him to smuggle them into some suitable journal, the second one preferably in the form of a paid advertisement, so as to make it appear to have originated within the family,⁷³—all of which Laube executed to the letter. Perfidy was further compounded by his request to Laube to help him with his own pen in his press campaign but to publish not a word directly against his cousin, who, “formerly his most intimate friend, now happened to be among his opponents.” From this time on Heine kept taking precautions to shield Carl from vicious public attacks. The reason why Heine, after the first paroxysm of rage was over, organized his campaign on such lines as to leave Carl’s name out of play, sometimes going so far as even to defend him,⁷⁴ is to be found in the reflection that it was Carl who held the key to his uncle’s millions, and Heine was shrewd enough not to risk a position from which no retreat was possible.

⁷⁰ Admitted in Heine’s letter to Detmold, January 23, 1845.

⁷¹ Heine to Campe, February 4, 1845.

⁷² In justice to Heine it must be understood that he meant by surrender to his family a pledge to write nothing offensive to his family. But instead of the revolting alternative of submitting to their censorship, he chose rather to be entirely silent on family matters. See covering note to letter to Campe of February 4, 1845.

⁷³ Heine to Laube, February 1, 1845.

⁷⁴ Heine to Varnhagen, February 16, 1846.

All these attempts to force his cousin's hand; neutralizing each other as they did, were by the very contradictoriness of the methods employed doomed to failure. I have gone into them so fully because they show in a typical way the limitations of Heine's reasoning. Just as Heine's poetry reveals his inability to compose works of larger scope on a balanced architectonic basis,—a fact which Legras has convincingly pointed out in his study of the 'Atta Troll' and the 'Wintermärchen'⁷⁵—so he was incapable of any consistent plan or policy in his practical affairs, despite a shrewdness in regard to details which must arouse our astonishment. His machinations were of the subtlest order, each taken by itself, but taken all in all, as a whole, they fail to reveal any thread of consistent plan or purpose. The same conclusion has forced itself upon me in tracing out Heine's erratic political attitude. Any new development of the moment, be it ever so precarious, was likely to make him turn a complete face-about and steer his opportunistic course in the opposite direction from that pursued heretofore.—Elsewhere I have pointed out how Heine made use of the Hegelian dialectic to deceive himself and his followers as to the significance of his opportunism.⁷⁶

It is clear, then, that Heine had none of that Nietzschean or Machiavellian amoralism with which he has at times been mistakenly associated. The amoralism of the super-man knows no scruples about applying the means that will serve his ends, but the supposition indispensable to giving any ethical dignity to his conduct is that he know his end and steer a straight course; that he think with trenchant clearness and strike with steady nerve, without wavering and half-heartedness. Heine lacked both the steadiness of aim and the sureness of arm in forging ahead. Both his aim and his stroke were vitiated by cross currents of thought. To bring this trait into sharp relief, contrast him with the steely hardness and suppleness of Frank Wedekind's super-man characters.—

Nothing came of the attempts to win Halle's services for mediation with Carl, and Heine promptly came to see him as the ultimate cause of Solomon's neglect of him in his will. The

⁷⁵ Jules Legras: "Henri Heine Poète." Paris, 1897; p. 388-90.

⁷⁶ In my paper: "Heine's Return to God." Modern Philology, October 1920.

force of his threats had been spent, and Heine now resorted to entreaty and self-humiliation, by writing Carl a very submissive letter;⁷⁷ for the pension itself, obtained on any terms, proved to be the ‘*summum bonum*,’ compared with which everything else, including his dignity and his honor, was of little account. He had come to recognize this quite clearly even when the attempts to influence Halle had been in full swing. He must have the pension at any cost, he had at that time declared to Campe,⁷⁸ even if Halle must be forced to pay it out of his own pocket, assuming that Carl was intransigent, and he had motivated his readiness to surrender by the words: “Ich gestehe Ihnen heute offen, ich habe gar keine Eitelkeit in der Weise anderer Menschen, mir liegt am Ende gar nichts an der Meinung des Publikums; mir ist nur eins wichtig, die Befriedigung meines inneren Willens—die Selbstachtung meiner Seele. . . . Zum Unglück ist mein Wille auch so starr wie der eines Wahnsin-nigen.”

The results of his letter to Carl proved that after all something was to be gained by meekness, where threats were futile, for in May we are told his family differences had been more or less adjusted,⁷⁹ which can mean nothing else than that Carl had come to his aid financially, without, however, giving any guarantees as to the future. But with this result Heine could not rest satisfied—much less now than at the time when his uncle was still living. What he demanded was the pension “uncurtailed and unconditioned,” even tho he expressed willingness to yield as to the form and accept it as a gift of grace, without stressing his right.⁸⁰

To this point the fight had been fought underground, by direct negotiation between the contending parties and anonymous press intrigues, but the public had not been given any official version of the affair. But now, during the lull, Heine had time and sufficient peace of mind to concern himself with the

⁷⁷ Heine to Campe, March 28, 1845.

⁷⁸ Letter of February 4, 1845.

⁷⁹ Heine to Laube, May 24, 1845. This assumption seems conclusively proved by Heine's statement (Letter to Campe, October 31, 1845) that Meyer-beer had guaranteed to pay him any possible subtraction from his pension out of his own pocket.

⁸⁰ Heine to Campe, October 31, 1845.

thought of his reputation, and he set to work to edit a legend to pass on to posterity; for as such we have every reason to regard Heine's letter of January 3, 1846 to Varnhagen, couched in the form of a new year's salutation and stamped unmistakably by its tone as an official or semi-official document that would stand publication without the risk of indiscretion. The nucleus of a legend is here presented in the suggestion of a parallel between his fate and that of Siegfried, the mastery of the form being such that a vision of the bleeding Germanic hero is conjured up before the eye without even the mention of Siegfried's name. The mere phrase, "wie entsetzlich mir von meinen nächsten Sippen und Magen mitgespielt worden," occurring near the beginning of the letter, calls up the whole picture, and all the emotions that are touched off at the thought of Siegfried immediately resurge. Heine was skilful enough to know what emphasis can be lent by restraint. He at once passes on to the discussion of other matters—the blue flower of Romanticism contrasted with the hardness of the modern realistic age. Only toward the end he lightly touches that chord once more, after speaking with an equally admirable restraint of his paralysis: "Der Verrath der im Schosse der Familie, wo ich waffenlos und vertrauend war, an mir verübt wurde, hat mich wie ein Blitz aus heiterer Luft getroffen und fast tödtlich beschädigt; wer die Umstände erwägt, wird hierin einen Meuchelmordsversuch sehen; die schleichende Mittelmässigkeit, die zwanzig Jahre lang harrete, ingrimmig neidisch gegen den Genius, hatte endlich ihre Siegesstunde erreicht. Im Grunde ist auch das eine alte Geschichte, die sich immer erneut." His idealizing self-portraiture reaches the height of self-apotheosis in the concluding words: "Ja, ich bin sehr körperkrank, aber die Seele hat wenig gelitten; eine müde Blume ist sie ein bischen gebeugt, aber keineswegs welk und sie wurzelt noch fest in der Wahrheit und Liebe."

This foundation of his official legend Heine reinforced toward the close of the year by a letter to Campe, written during his stay in the Pyrenees, where the false rumor of his death, widely circulated in the German press, had reached him. The body of this letter also has all the ear-marks of a public announcement. After expressing his conviction that his life is doomed, with the possibility of prolonging the agony

for another year or two, he continues: "Nun, das geht mich nichts an, das ist die Sorge der ewigen Götter, die mir nichts vorzuwerfen haben, und deren Sache ich immer mit Muth und Liebe auf Erden vertreten habe. Das holdselige Bewusstseyn, ein schönes Leben geführt zu haben, erfüllt meine Seele selbst in dieser kummervollen Zeit, wird mich auch hoffentlich in den letzten Stunden bis an den weissen Abgrund begleiten." And a little further on he adds: "Gott verzeihe meiner Familie die Versündigung, die sie an mir verschuldet. Wahrlich nicht die Geldsache, sondern die moralische Entrüstung, dass mein intimster Jugendfreund und Blutsverwandter das Wort seines Vaters nicht in Ehren gehalten hat, das hat mir die Knochen im Herzen⁸¹ gebrochen, und ich sterbe an diesem Bruch." How this legend was further built up by Heine's posthumous poems will be shown in due course.

The exposition of Heine's official legend has taken us beyond events that were meanwhile transpiring. At the opening of the year Heine had made new ineffective overtures to his cousin as to securing a legal status for his pension, both directly and thru the mediation of Prince Hermann Pückler, who was one of Heine's literary satellites. The correspondence between Pückler and Carl Heine, while confirming the fact that Carl had reluctantly been giving financial support to the poet, shows how deep-seated must have been Carl's anger and his suspicions of Heine's intentions. "Die Pietät, die ich meinem verstorbenen geliebten Vater schuldig bin, gebietet mir selbst, der Bosheit Schranken zu setzen"—with these words he cuts off Pückler's plea.⁸² In consequence Heine resorted once more to the weapon of intimidation. He has discarded the idea of bringing suit, he tells Campe,⁸³ in order to show that it is no longer any question of money, the true reason being, of course, that he knew his claims to lack any legal basis. Instead he now describes himself as writing a hideous memoire aimed at exposing the family.

Upon the renewal of this disastrous course he was steered, without doubt, by the new ally he had won for his cause,

⁸¹ "Die Knochen im Herzen!" Is this absurd figure an unconscious betrayal of the insincerity of his pathos?

⁸² For this correspondence see Heine's *Briefwechsel* (Hirth) vol. II, p. 577-8.

⁸³ Letter of February 6, 1846.

Ferdinand Lassalle, the powerful leader of the German proletariat. Endowed with an intellectual acumen to which Heine unhesitatingly conceded superiority over his own, and possessed of a degree of unscrupulousness which made Heine feel like a novice, Lassalle fanned Heine's wrath against his family to the hottest flame. What a difference between the extreme of his anger as expressed to Campe the year previous—"Lassen Sie den Anzug ungeheurer Mistkarren ein bischen riechen"—, and the depths of Old-Testament wrath as voiced in his letter to Lassalle:⁸⁴

Sagen Sie das an Varnhagen, sagen Sie ihm: die Herzen der Geldparaone seyen so verstockt, dass das blosse Androhen von Plagen nicht hinreichend sey, obgleich sie wohl wissen, wie gross die Zaubermacht des Autors, der schon vor ihren eignen Augen so manches Schlangenkunststück verrichtet hat—Nein, diese Menschen müssen die Plagen fühlen, ehe sie daran glauben und ihren zähen Selbstwillen aufgeben, sie müssen Blut sehen, auch Frösche, Ungeziefer, wilde Thiere, Jan Hagel u.s.w., und erst beym zehnten Artikel, worin man ihre geliebte Erstgeburt todtschlägt, geben sie nach, aus Furcht vor dem noch grösseren Übel, dem eignen Tod.

While Lassalle was in Berlin, serving Heine's cause by press manoeuvres and by recruiting new forces:—Varnhagen, the diplomat and man of letters; Felix Mendelssohn, the well-known musician;⁸⁵ Meyerbeer, with whom Heine had recently broken but whom he still saw fit to use;⁸⁶ and even the renowned savant Alexander von Humboldt—⁸⁷ Heine was plotting new perfidies at home. He went so far as to write an anonymous defamatory article against himself, culminating in the claim that whereas he possessed the sympathies of the lower classes in his family feud, the upper classes were keeping aloof. To this article, which cleverly introduced the issue of the then nascent consciousness of class war, Varnhagen, who received a copy before it was sent to the press, was asked to write a reply, countering the claim as to the aloofness of the upper classes by publishing in so far as expedient Prince Pückler's

⁸⁴ February 1846, exact date missing.

⁸⁵ Mendelssohn refused to become involved, piqued because of Heine's previous attacks against him which he regarded as staged in the interests of his rival Meyerbeer (Heine to Lassalle, February 10, 1846).

⁸⁶ Heine to Meyerbeer, December 24, 1845.

⁸⁷ Probably without any success, altho Humboldt had given Heine active proofs of his sympathy previously.

correspondence with Carl Heine. Varnhagen was further asked to emphasize the justice of Heine's claims by quoting Meyerbeer's testimony to that effect, being careful, however, to mention the name of Carl with the utmost flattery and consideration.⁸⁸ A week later Heine reinforced his request to Varnhagen by a second note⁸⁹ and also by writing his aide-in-chief, Lassalle, a letter which makes a point of emphasizing that the article to be written by Varnhagen should duly dwell on the fact that the pension was now actually being paid, in order by this public acknowledgment to make it more difficult for Carl to discontinue it later.⁹⁰ To Varnhagen's credit it must be stated that he refused to stoop to such tactics. He deprecated the abuse of private correspondence and urged Heine to adopt a moderate and conciliatory attitude.⁹¹

While this manoeuvre was still pending, Heine ordered his lieutenant in Berlin to impress Meyerbeer into the service. It was thanks to Meyerbeer's mediation, we remember, that Solomon had been induced in 1839 to assign a fixed annual pension to his nephew. In the course of the year that followed the death of Heine's uncle, Meyerbeer, anxious to oblige Heine, had given him his written testimony to the effect that the pension had been granted with the understanding that it was to continue until Heine's death.⁹² Meanwhile Heine had become embroiled with Meyerbeer over financial matters and had renounced the latter's friendship in cutting terms.⁹³ In view of this fact he could not now solicit any favors from him. But as Heine believed that his mediation could be of use, he instructed Lassalle to "apply thumbscrews to the bear," in order to force him to approach Carl in Heine's behalf.⁹⁴ By "thumbscrews" he, of course, understood threats to prick the bubble of Meyerbeer's fame by exposing the press bribery upon which it rested.⁹⁵ How Heine could expect to succeed by such means

⁸⁸ Heine to Varnhagen, February 16, 1846.

⁸⁹ February 24, 1846.

⁹⁰ Heine to Ferdinand Lassalle, February 27, 1846.

⁹¹ *ibidem*.

⁹² Heine to Campe, October 31, 1845.

⁹³ Heine to Meyerbeer, December 24, 1845.

⁹⁴ February 27, 1846.

⁹⁵ See his satirical poem "Festgedicht" (1847), *Werke II*, 178.

is difficult to understand. Had he forgotten the fate of Xerxes' lash-driven legions at Thermopylae?

What threats against allies and enemies failed to accomplish for Heine, the premature rumor of his death seems to have brought about. On November 12, 1846 he informed Campe:

Die voreilige Nachricht meines Todes hat mir viele Theilnahme gewonnen; rührend edle Briefe in Menge. Auch Carl Heine schrieb mir den liebreichsten Freundschaftsbrief. Die kleine Trödeley, die lumpige Gelddifferenz, ist ausgeglichen, und dieses that meinem verletzten Gemüthe wahrhaft wohl. Aber das Vertrauen zu meiner Familie ist dahin, und Carl Heine, wie reich er auch ist und wie liebreich er sich mir zuwendet, so wäre er doch der letzte, an den ich mich in einer Lebensnoth wenden würde. Ich habe hartnäckig darauf bestanden, dass er mir bis auf den letzten Schilling auszahle, wozu ich mich durch das Wort seines Vaters berechtigt glaubte, aber wahrhaftig, ich würde auch keinen Schilling mehr von ihm annehmen."

This preliminary peace was followed by the ratification of a formal treaty during February of the following year, when Carl visited Heine in Paris. At that time Heine added a postscript to the will which he had drawn up the previous year. In this he speaks of his cousin in terms which give some idea as to the abysmal degree to which he had renounced his pride. What could have been more bitter for him to write than words like the following!

Ja, er (Carl) verriet hier wieder sein ganzes edles Gemüt, seine ganze Liebe, und als er mir zum Pfande seines feierlichen Versprechens die Hand reichte, drückte ich sie an meine Lippen, so tief war ich erschüttert, und so sehr glich er in diesem Momente seinem seligen Vater, meinem armen Oheim, dem ich so oft wie ein Kind die Hand küsste, wenn er mir eine Güte erwies! (Werke VII, 514)

"Als er mir . . . die Hand reichte, drückte ich sie an meine Lippen."—I have spared no effort to peel off the superficial layers surrounding the kernel of Heine's personality, but in my attempt to picture this scene I have to steady myself by a literal reading of Heine's maxim: "Die Hand, die man nicht abhauen kann, muss man küssen."⁹⁶—

Two days after this meeting he tells his mother and sister that he is very well satisfied with Carl,⁹⁷ and in April he reports to them that he is burning all indiscreet family letters.⁹⁸ But

⁹⁶ Heine to Lewald, March 1, 1838.

⁹⁷ Letter of February 28, 1847.

⁹⁸ Letter of April 19, 1847.

by June his resentment over the bitter cup he had swallowed has had time to well up again. He writes to Campe⁹⁹ that he has no reason to be satisfied with Carl, the latter having dictated the terms of the reconciliation. He makes light of Carl's generosity, saying that his purse had remained entirely untouched—Heine's way of implying that Carl did nothing beyond keeping his father's promise. What aggravated Heine's resentment was his constantly increasing financial plight. His health had broken down, so that he earned nothing by his pen over long periods of time; his treatments swallowed up heavy doctors' and nurses' fees; Mathilde kept on spending as recklessly as ever; speculations turned out badly; and one of the most severe blows came when his pension from the French government was stopped with the overthrow of the July monarchy. In consequence of this plight Heine, who had declared that he would never take a shilling from Carl over and above his due, found himself forced to appeal again and again to Carl for emergency aid, which, tho always granted in the end, was spiced with bitter humiliations. It is easy to understand how each new appeal to the man whom he wished to owe nothing must have acted upon his system like a dose of poison; yet again his resentment against Carl was such that he began to take an almost insane delight in bleeding Carl's purse under one pretext or another, by lie and subterfuge. In this course he may have been confirmed by the reflection that, having sacrificed his honor irrevocably, it was only good business to sell it at the highest price possible, mindful of his own jesting remark on how foolish it was for a man not to love his wife, when she cost him the same in either case.¹⁰⁰

It would be only a wearying statistician's task to quote in detail the daily readings of Heine's family thermometer during the remaining years of his life. The tortures of his harrowing illness increased his constitutional suspiciousness. Even after Carl had paid his debts and almost doubled his pension, he trembled from quarter to quarter lest payments should be stopped, the more so as he was forced in spite of them to borrow from his brothers Max and Gustav and even accept aid from his old mother—not to speak of the substantial alms which

⁹⁹ June 20, 1847.

¹⁰⁰ Heine to his mother, June 21, 1853.

he repeatedly solicited and received from members of the Rothschild family. He has nothing but bitterness for Carl in his confidential letters, referring to him in rather cryptic terms as "der Sohn des Re Aaron,"¹⁰¹ "der junge Fatum,"¹⁰² and "der junge Schofelly,"¹⁰³ altho continuing to flatter him publicly.¹⁰⁴ Carl's repeated visits to Heine's sick-bed in 1850 did nothing to alter his real attitude,¹⁰⁵ and as late as June 1853, when Carl brought his sister Therese to the bed-side of the dying poet, Carl was to Heine only the prison guard come to forestall confidential communications.¹⁰⁶ The petty intrigues to obtain money from Carl by the connivance of Max, on the strength of fictitious debts¹⁰⁷ are weak repetitions of former tactics, reminding one of the serpent whose fangs had been pulled, but coming as they do out of the mattress-grave shrouded in perpetual twilight, they elicit sympathy rather than indignation. Of his return to an Old-Testament God of revenge we find an illuminating hint in his remark to Max: "Dass Dr. Halle verrückt ist und wie ein Hahn kräht, wirst Du wissen. Wie witzig ist Gott!"¹⁰⁸ His promise to keep silence on family matters Heine kept during his lifetime with one exception. His poem "Affrontenburg," a transparent description of Solomon's villa which he brands as a hot-bed of foul defamation was included in his "Vermischte Schriften" that appeared in 1854, but I do not know whether the family took any notice of it.

It may be interesting, on the other hand, to tabulate the sums Heine received from Carl after Solomon's death. The following figures are based entirely on the evidence of Heine's own letters.

1845—Heine received money from Carl, the amount not stated; probably 4000 francs.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ Heine to Max, January 9, 1850.

¹⁰² Heine to Max, March 22, 1850.

¹⁰³ Heine to Max, August 12, 1852.

¹⁰⁴ See his open letter, "Berichtigung" of April 15, 1849. Werke VII, 538.

¹⁰⁵ Heine to his mother and sister May 6 and September 26, 1850.

¹⁰⁶ Heine to his mother, June 21, 1853.

¹⁰⁷ Heine's letters to Max, May 3, 1849 and March 22, 1850.

¹⁰⁸ Heine to Max, January 9, 1850.

¹⁰⁹ Heine to Laube, May 24, 1845; to Campe, July 21, 1845.

- 1846—He received 4000 francs.¹¹⁰
 1847—He received the full pension, 4800 francs, pledged with the promise of half that amount for Mathilde after his death.
 1848—He received the pension (4800 francs) and in addition Carl paid his debts to the amount of 5000 francs.¹¹¹
 1849—He received the pension plus an additional subsidy of 3000 francs.¹¹²
 1850—He received the pension and a subsidy of 750 francs for the first quarter. Then Carl intimated his intention to stop the subsidy,¹¹³ and there is no positive proof that Heine succeeded in gaining his point. (It is made more than likely, however, by his letter to Gustav, February 7, 1851 and to his mother, February 5, 1851.)
 1851—He received the pension plus the necessary extraordinary subsidies, this time without any preceding chicanery.¹¹⁴
 1852—He received 2000 francs less than the previous year, and in consequence made every effort to get this additional sum by intrigue.¹¹⁵ I do not know whether he succeeded.
 1853—He received besides funds from Carl (amounts not mentioned) a gift of money from Therese (amount not known.)
 1854—No mention of any figures.
 1855—Heine stated his fixed income from Germany as 12000 francs.¹¹⁶ Of this amount Campe paid him about 2400 francs (1200 mark banko) by contract. Consequently Heine must have been receiving a total fixed pension of 9600 francs.
 1856—Nothing mentioned.

These sums were large compared with the gifts of his uncle, but was not the price paid disproportionately larger?—that dread disease, heretofore burrowing silently underground, now stalking swiftly with raised head; those seething emotions of hate and dread, bubbling over at the slightest breath of wind like a witch's cauldron; bitterest of all, those moments in which a sense of shame poisoned even his indestructible love of himself.

The bitterest of these Heine conquered, by making his peace with God—on his own terms; by transforming his contempt for his own self into an emotion of cosmic nihilism—the basic motif of “Vitzliputzli” and “Spanische Atriden”; by casting his ideal vision of his self and his fate—*das eigene*

¹¹⁰ Heine to Varnhagen, February 16, 1846.

¹¹¹ Heine to Max, December 3, 1848.

¹¹² *ibidem*.

¹¹³ Heine to Max, March 22, 1850.

¹¹⁴ Heine to his mother and sister, February 5, 1851.

¹¹⁵ Heine to his brother Gustav, April 17, 1852.

¹¹⁶ Heine to his brother Gustav, August 17, 1855.

Wunschnbild—into the mold of historic characters like the poets Firdusi and Jehuda Ben Halevy; by building up the legend, finally, that made him the guileless hero slain by family treachery. This legend, first sketched out in his letters, as quoted above, and rounded out subsequently by poems calculated for posthumous revenge, must in its later stages be regarded rather as an expression of the will to survive as a person, than as conscious make-believe. I grant that the latter predominated to begin with, but conscious hypocrisy gives way, except in the rarest of cases, to a sub-conscious reconstruction and reinterpretation of the past in favor of the self; it could not help but do so in the case of a poet so abnormally amorous of his self as Heine. That his legendary version of the struggle had become part and parcel of his mental make-up is apparent from a study of his poem, "Der Dichter Firdusi." Here it was the duplicity of the shah in dealing with the poet Firdusi which struck Heine as a striking parallel to his own fate at the hands of Carl, and supplied the initial spark that set Heine's creative imagination working on the Firdusi theme.¹¹⁷ Granted the astonishing transformative power of the sub-conscious in his "Buch der Lieder," where the flimsiest shred of fact grew into the most intricate web of emotional history, how can the emotional genuineness of Heine's last poems of hate be doubted!

It is these last poems of undisguised hate,¹¹⁸ and not only these but all those poems of Heine's last years over which the emotions released by the grim family struggle shed their dusky reflection, that represent the positive values which Heine's poet's personality distilled out of the most evil passions and out of his self-debasement. Much of Heine's late poetry derives its austere force from the fact that he could not entirely down the consciousness of having prostituted his honor. His sin was common enough, from the nothing-but-moralist's point of view, but his manner of atonement—the creation of priceless aesthetic values out of the very sordidness of his material existence—was unique. The compensation he made was full, tho not in kind. And in the valuation of his personality as a whole, his sin must be balanced against his atonement.

¹¹⁷ Fully analyzed by Helene Herrmann in "Studien zu Heines Romanzero," Berlin, 1906, p. 94 ff.

¹¹⁸ For these poems see Werke, vol. II, book 2, numbers 63–68.

May not the cynic have the last word for once? Would it not do to picture a chance encounter between Heine and Frank Wedekind in the other world, à la Swedenborg, and have Wedekind deliver himself of a little sermon to Heine with all the courtesy owing to a spiritual father? Imagine him quoting his own Marquis von Keith—gypsy, self-styled marquis, horse-thief, entrepreneur and philosopher in one—to the following effect:

Lassen Sie sich noch eines sagen: Das einzig richtige Mittel, seine Mitmenschen auszunützen, besteht darin, dass man sie bei ihren guten Seiten nimmt. Darin liegt die Kunst, geliebt zu werden, die Kunst, recht zu behalten. Je ergiebiger Sie Ihre Mitmenschen übervorteilen, um so gewissenhafter müssen Sie darauf achten, dass Sie das Recht auf Ihrer Seite haben. Suchen Sie Ihren Nutzen niemals im Nachteil eines tüchtigen Menschen, sondern immer nur im Nachteil von Schurken und Dummköpfen. Und nun übermitte ich Ihnen den Stein der Weisen: das glänzendste Geschäft in dieser Welt ist die Moral."

Would Heine parry the thrust with the heroic pose and the grandiloquent phrase of which he was master, or would he smilingly counter the cynic-moralist with his marquis' last words—

"Das Leben ist eine Rutschbahn!"?

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